Indo-US joint war exercises in Agra

104. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian and Special Forces troops from the United States conducted joint war games in the backyard of the Taj Mahal in Agra; and

(b) if so, the salient features and the main objectives of the exercises and the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) A joint Indo-US exercise was conducted from May 7—27, 2002, involving joint para-drop at the designated dropping zone in Agra. The para drop was conducted for training in interoperability and to inculcate the advantages of the techniques and technology employed by US Forces.

Indigenous production of arms

105. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the report of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) India ranks fifth among the first ten countries in the world in import of armaments in the year 2001;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the concrete steps being taken to produce more arms indigenously ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir. As per Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Year Book 2001, India ranks sixth among the first ten countries in the world in import of armaments.

(b) In order to meet strategic requirements, it is necessary to import high-tech equipment of right capability.

(c) Defence Research & Development Organisation is engaged in indigenous development of weapons and weapon systems to be manufactured